Decrease in mail handled by postal department

*412. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether with the advent of computer and telecom networks there has been considerable decrease in volume of mail handled by Postal Department including telegrams;

(b) if so, whether a major part of the infrastructure including manpower built over the year by the Department of Posts has been rendered idle and unproductive; and

(c) the steps being planned to diversify the operations of the Postal Department with its vast network of branches and manpower?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Over the last few years, there has been some declining trend in overall mail traffic. One of the important factors responsible has been the advent of computer and telecom networks. The total mail traffic in the country handled in the last three years is as under:—

(In Crores)

Category of Mail	Year		
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Registered & unregistered articles	1103.1	909.4	863.5
Total number of telegrams booked	3.33	2.68	2.32

While there is declining trend in traditional mail due to new technology like fax, e-mail, telephone, mobile phones etc. but business to business and business to customer mail is increasing. Department has introduced business products like Speed Post and Express Parcel Post to cater to this segment. There is an increasing trend in Speed Post and Express Parcel Post over the last few years which is as under:—

(In Crores)

Category of Mail	Year		
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Speed Post Articles	5.28	6.34	8.26
Express Parcel Post	0.43	0.57	0.67

(b) No, Sir. Periodical establishment reviews based on workload are carried out as per laid down guidelines.

Sanctioned manpower has been reduced over the last five years by abolishing 26,328 (twenty six thousand three hundred twenty eight) posts as an outcome of the two percent (2%) annual cut imposed by the Government on direct recruitment vacancies. Speed Post and other premium products like Business Post are showing a healthy increasing trend and therefore, more manpower is being deployed on these services.

Department has also added value to financial services/products through tie ups with organization like Western union, Oriental Insurance, Unit Trust of India, other Mutual Funds etc. For these activities manpower is required.

(c) During the current Five Year Plan, the activities being undertaken are enclosed as Statement.

Statement

Activities under taken under current five year plan

(I) Business Development

a. Retail Post, Media Post, Business Post, e-post and other value added premium services have been introduced.

b. Bill collection especially in respect of utilities pertaining to Telecom Services is provided at post Offices, through Bill Mail Service introduced in September 2003.

c. Marketing structure has been created to increase revenue with a focus on traditional as well as premium products.

d. Parcel division has been set up to tap the parcel market in a concerted way.

e. Logistic Post has been started in a few states and is being extended.

(II) Financial Services

The following initiatives have been taken:—

a. International Money Transfer Service

b. Distribution of Mutual Funds & Bonds and pension products

c. Electronic Funds Transfer

d. Warrant payment

(III) Other Important initiatives

a. Insurance Business:—

(i) Rural Postal Insurance has been showing rapid growth using the retail network of post offices in the rural area.

(ii) Department has entered into Memorandum of Understanding with Oriental Insurance Company Ltd. This Project has been Launched on a pilot basis in 1.5 Postal Circles.

b. Gramin Sanchar Sewak Scheme:—

As per Memorandum of Understanding with BSNL, Gramin Sanchar Sewak Scheme has been introduced whereby Gramin Dak Sewak delivery agents provide mobile telephone facility in rural areas in selected places.

SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Sir, the Minister has given a very big and long answer. Yet, it is not an appropriate answer. The Indian postal service network is one of the largest services in India. There are 1,55,669 post offices in India.

श्री सभापति: आप क्वेश्चन करिए, समय पूरा हो रहा है। आप सप्लीमेंटरी क्वेश्चन करिए, स्ट्रेट क्वेश्चन कर लीजिए ताकि दो मिनट में जवाब आ जाए।

एक माननीय सदस्य: सर, यह लंबा कवेश्चन है?

श्री सभापति: लंबा क्वेश्चन है, लेकिन समय लंबा नहीं है।

SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: There are so many post offices. But now because of this telecom, the number of these post offices is decreasing. Real manpower is in the post offices. There are so many things done by

them such as sending postcards, parcels, money orders, pension, etc. Even at the time of elections, post offices are used like anything. Postmen are doing work like anything. There is manpower. They are going from house to house. Mostly ladies are postmen. There is a decrease in the post office revenue. Is the hon. Minister in a position to tell me as to what they can do for post offices? I would also like to know whether they would give importance only to the telecom, which is used by rich people. Post office is a thing, which is used by the poor people. Sir, 89 per cent of the post offices are getting rural. But because of this mobile phone, this thing and that thing , post offices are being neglected. Is the Minister going to take the responsibility of all the people who are working in post offices?...*(Interruptions)*... Sir, I will tell you one more thing. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the Minister reply. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, the Member is right that there is a decrease in person-to-person post. It is because of the advent of computers and also because of the telecom. Sir, the Member is wrong to say that telephones are used only by rich people. Sir, the main purpose of this Government is to ensure that tariff of telephone is so cheap that even a common man or even a farmer can use the telephone. Sir, it is not only a phenomenon in India, Sir, but overall, the rest of world, Sir, E-mails are the principal reason for posts to go down. But in India it is telephone because low cost of telephone is the primary reason for the person-to-person post to reduce.

SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Sir, my second supplementary is this. The hon. Minister in the answer has stated that for poor people he is supplying mobile phones in rural areas. I, as a Member of Parliament, do not have a mobile phone so far. He should not think that it is a cheap thing. Mobile phones are spoiling the young people of our country. Young students are using the mobile phones. The boys are talking to the girls and the girls are talking to the boys. ...*(Interruptions)*... Nothing more than that. ...*(Interruptions)*... If the Minister wants to help the country ...*(Interruptions)*... I want to tell you one thing, Sir. In the Railways rich people travel in the upper class, compensating the loss on account of poor people's fare. Is the Minister ready to do that under his Ministry? Let him answer and let him give the time when he is going to do that?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, through you, I would say that the Member is wrong. I never said that we are giving telephones to the poor people. I am saying that our purpose is to encourage the use of telephone by the common man of India especially farmers and also ensure the cost of telephone and the tariff are much more affordable. Sir, every new invention has got its evils. People use it for good purpose and for bad purpose. Nuclear power is used for making atom bomb as well as for producing energy. It is up to the parents to control their daughters and sons. ...*(Interruptions)*...

PROF. P.J. KURIAN: Sir, there is a set of workers in the Postal Department who are called Extra-Departmental workers. They are paid a paltry sum. They are not considered as staff of the Department. ...*(Interruptions)*... More than one lakh such poorest of the poor workers are there. will the Minister consider treating them as members of the staff of the Department and also giving them the salary, which is being paid to the staff in the lowest grade?

SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Sir, I want answer to my question. ...*(Interruptions)*... Why do they put photograph on mobile phones? ...*(Interruptions)*... What is the use of that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat. ...*(Interruptions)*... Question Hour is over. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, with regard to the specific question put previously by the hon. Member, I would like to say that we have a service, which was introduced, through the Gramin Dak Sewak where for the poor farmers who cannot afford telephone, the postmen will take a phone by his bicycle and go to each person who wants to make a call so that he can afford it . So, this scheme is already in practice and it is getting response from the public.

PROF. P.J. KURIAN: Sir, my question was not answered. The Minister is discriminating. He showed all sympathy to the lady Member. Why not to me?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.